

FOOD AS MEDICINE

Ziindaagan, Sunflower

Bopogimenh Giizis - Broken Snowshoe Moon (13th moon)

Sunflower has a Seed Face²

Our ancestors enjoyed the gift of ziindaagan, sunflower in many ways. Seeds were ground or pounded into flour for cakes, mush or bread. Sometimes seeds were mixed into the meal with other vegetables such as beans, squash, and corn. The seeds were often eaten for a snack, mixed with dried berries, like a trail mix. Seeds were used to make bread or eaten raw. There are references of squeezing the oil from the seed and using the oil in making bread. In addition to sunflower seeds, many other seeds were eaten or used in medicines. Pumpkin and squash seeds were an important part of the diet, too. Various seeds were added to foods adding flavor and many nutritious benefits!

The oil derived from the sunflower seeds had cosmetic and medicinal properties. It was a good source for maintaining smooth skin and hair. Sunflower seed oil was made into a poultice for treating skin ailments like snake and spider bites or skin dryness.

Sunflower seeds are now known to have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and expectorant properties. Sunflower leaves can be used as an infusion to treat high fevers, lung problems and diarrhea. The leaves can help to reduce the symptoms of asthma, rheumatoid arthritis and help in lowering blood pressure. The sunflower plant contains one of the best sources of phenylalanine, helpful in the control of pain, which can help to control migraine headaches. It is a rich source of vitamin E, promoting healthy tissue.

The seeds, rich in phytosterols, reduce cholesterol levels and improve overall heart health. With high levels of magnesium, it helps to regulate nerve function, provide a calming effect and lowering blood pressure. The high content of the amino acid, tryptophan, enhances serotonin production, which improves mood and alleviates depression.

Different varieties of the Sunflower can also be cultivated to produce purple and yellow dyes for textiles, body painting and other decorations. The plant and the seeds were widely used in ceremonies. Meanwhile, the dried stalk was used as a building material.

(Photo and Drawing Credit 27,30, Sunflower)

